

Restrictions on antibiotic use

Antibiotic use around the World has been under scrutiny for some time, particularly in Europe. Garth attended a meeting of movers and shakers at a meeting organised by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) in Liverpool last autumn, and it was clear that there is strong political pressure to change prescribing habits and reduce antibiotic use for both humans and animals. The routine use of mass medication in feed or water to pigs and poultry is particularly under threat.

The motivation behind this move is the emergence of antimicrobial resistance in bacteria. This is causing great problems in hospitals especially, and has been described by the UK's chief medical officer as a ticking time bomb on the same level as terrorist attacks!

If we, as an industry, do not take action voluntarily there is a strong likelihood that restrictive legislation will appear out of an E.U. ivory tower in the next few years.

The fact that there is virtually no evidence to suggest that antibiotic use in animals has caused any significant problem in humans seems to carry little weight in E.U. decision making. In fact, the medics themselves concede that the problem is largely one of their own making through inappropriate antibiotic use by GPs and hospital doctors.

Regardless of the facts, the bottom line is that we have to start thinking about this **NOW**. We cannot afford to be reliant on antibiotics to get our pigs to slaughterweight. This makes economic and welfare sense anyway as a pig that is reliant on antibiotics is, by definition, a disease-challenged pig that will not perform efficiently. In addition to this, the cost of medicines can be a significant factor.

Inside this issue

Restrictions on antibiotic use	1
Update on emergency euthanasia	2
African Swine Fever detected in Europe	3
Biosecurity Biosecurity Biosecurity	3
Update on creep feeding	4
Staff news	4

Pigs can perform very well without drugs if buildings, management, pig flow, health status and biosecurity are of a high standard. With recent Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) data showing DAPP well above the cost of production, and a prediction that this trend will continue through the year, maybe now is the time to invest in your farm.

Maybe now is the time to make improvements to increase the efficiency of your pigs' performance and reduce your medicines costs, as well as appeasing the politicians and safeguarding our antibiotics for when they are really needed.

For further information on the responsible use of antimicrobials there is a farmer-targeted guide produced by RUMA and available at www.ruma.org.uk/antimicrobials.htm

The overall message on antibiotic use is: **use as much as necessary but as little as possible.**



Pig and Poultry Fair 2014

Once again we will be exhibiting at Pig and Poultry which is being held on 13th and 14th May at Stoneleigh. We would like to take this opportunity to invite you along to visit us on stand number **57** for a chat and refreshments. There will be a comprehensive representation from Garth in attendance, vets, office and field staff all there to answer any questions you may have. We are once again sharing the stand with East Riding Farm Services so please take the time to join us.

Update on emergency euthanasia

Garth have now organised four training courses on this subject in conjunction with BPEX and initially presented by Charlie Mason of the Humane Slaughter Association. They have been interesting and informative meetings as well as fulfilling a Red Tractor requirement for training by April 2014. By popular demand at one of these events (well, one person asked...) we are pleased to present a summary of the appropriate methods of euthanasia for different ages of pig:

CLASS OF PIG	METHOD OF EUTHANASIA
Piglets less than 5kg or 28 days old	Blunt trauma Cash poultry stunner
Weaned nursery, grower and finisher pigs	Captive bolt pistol and exsanguination (bleeding out) Captive bolt pistol and pithing Shotgun Rifle
Adult pigs	Captive bolt pistol and exsanguination (bleeding out) Captive bolt pistol and pithing Shotgun Rifle

Please note that it is also a Red Tractor requirement that all farms have access to a copy of The Casualty Pig produced by the Pig Veterinary Society (PVS). This was updated in April 2013, so copies of the small green booklet that many of you are familiar with are no longer current. The revised version may be found online at <http://www.pigvetsoc.org.uk/news/index.php?id=151> (then click on the PDF link at the bottom of the text) or we can send out a paper copy on request.

Farms should be compliant with the new rules now (from 1st April 2014). Remember that the requirements are for training PLUS a practical assessment of competence on farm by your vet. Proof of compliance with both aspects maybe required for your annual Red Tractor audit.

African Swine Fever detected in Europe

Since 2007 African Swine Fever (ASF) has been spreading around the western region of Russia. At the end of January this year the first case in the EU was detected in a wild boar in Lithuania, and at the end of February a second EU case was detected in Poland, also in a wild boar.

There are immediate commercial implications to this, such as Russia banning the import of pigs and pork from the whole EU. Alongside this, the potential health implications for commercial pigs are shocking.

Depending on the strain of the virus, ASF can be a devastating disease in pigs. It can cause a wide range of symptoms, such as depression, anorexia, huddling, staggering, coughing, cyanosis, vomiting and scour. In breeding pigs abortion can occur. In classic outbreaks the mortality can reach 100%, ie: all the pigs on an affected farm may die, although milder forms can also occur. At post-mortem examination the disease is characterised by widespread haemorrhage in the carcase.

ASF is a notifiable disease within the EU, which means there is a legal obligation to report a suspected outbreak to the authorities. If you see any of the above signs or are at all suspicious, **contact us or DEFRA without delay.**

The UK has never had a case of ASF, and it is vital for our pig industry that this remains the case. While the nearest cases of ASF are currently a great distance from our shores, the disease remains a threat.

This is firstly because of potential carriage of the virus in imported pigs or semen. Legally the movement of pigs within Europe cannot be restricted by individual governments, but thankfully one recent planned import of boars from Poland to the UK was voluntarily cancelled.

Secondly, the virus has the ability to survive in pork or processed meat for several months. With increasing travel between the UK and the affected region of Europe plus many Eastern European workers on our farms, along with a blurred meat supply chain which can make it difficult to identify the origin of meat products, it is imperative that pork products of any description are kept away from pigs.

While direct feeding of such material is already controlled (eg: the ban on swill feeding) it should also be standard policy on all farms that **pork products are not permitted in staff canteens and lunch boxes.**

As we so often seem to have to advise these days:

Stay Vigilant. Be Biosecure. Keep Clean.

Biosecurity Biosecurity Biosecurity

Sorry to keep banging on about this subject, but it is incredibly relevant at the moment.

A recent survey of submissions by AHVLA has found that **Swine Dysentery** is widespread in the UK. Many different strains have been identified and many cases are connected by logistics, transport or ownership. In several instances, affected neighbouring farms have had different strains. This means that, in all probability in these cases, dysentery has **not** been spread by birds, rodents, magical spirits or a plague of locusts, but because of **POOR BIOSECURITY** involving wagons or people.

In the US, **Porcine Epidemic Diarrhoea virus** continues to rampage through the pig sector. Outbreaks in Canada have been linked to porcine plasma products incorporated into feed. In other words, PEDv does not have mysterious powers to leap between herds – good old *Homo sapiens* appears to have been delivering it right into the pigs' hungry mouths! Should the virus reach our shores, excellent biosecurity may be necessary to keep it out of your farm.

Update on creep feeding

In the last Pig Issue our article on improving growth rate referred to a target creep feed intake of 500g per pig by weaning. This was the amount thought to be required in order to gain any significant benefit in future growth rates. We are aware that many units have not been able to achieve this and, therefore, believe creep feeding is a waste of time. It is then either not done carefully or not done at all.

However, recent trial work has shown that this almost unachievable holy grail is actually not quite so holy after all! The new generation of creep feeds (which have been discussed in a previous Pig Issue) are more palatable so encourage better intakes. But it has also been shown that 250g per pig prior to weaning, just half the previous amount quoted, leads to significantly improved performance post-weaning.

It is still important to manage your creep feeding well by feeding fresh food regularly in clean containers, but hopefully many more farrowing house staff will feel motivated to do this if the target is more realistic.

Staff news

Many of you will be aware that vet Elizabeth Lloyd left us in January to pursue her career on the other side of the World in New Zealand, and we wish her well in her endeavours.



Our veterinary team was bolstered in March by the arrival of Eduardo Velazquez.

Eduardo hails from the Canary island of Grand Canaria where he also received his veterinary training. Since 2009 he has worked in the UK as an Official Veterinarian in various meat processing plants. He was keen to make the move into clinical practice and we look forward to introducing him and his enthusiasm to you over the coming months.

And finally, but by no means least, our vet Louise tied the knot on Easter Sunday. She married Neil, who farms in East Yorkshire, at a glittering ceremony at The Parsonage Hotel in Escrick. Keep your eye on "Hello" magazine for a full spread of pictures of the event or, more realistically, on Zoe's Facebook page.....!